

Mahiya Buddhavarapu

Both St. Vincent's Hospital and The Ursuline School share a similar mission of charity and service to the community as a whole. I take part in many service opportunities around my town because it allows me to be a part of something much bigger than myself.

The two main places I volunteer are Gigi's Playhouse in Ardsley and White Plains Hospital. Gigi's Playhouse is a Down's Syndrome achievement center and its central message is to send a message of acceptance for all. Gigi's has variety of programs such as Cooking Club or music programs designed to both adults and children learn and grow. I have family members who struggle with Down's Syndrome, and it is programs such as Gigi's that are helping to change the world's perspective on Down's Syndrome. White Plains Hospital is another large part of my volunteer work. I volunteer on the nursing unit of the hospital where I stock gowns, get nurses any supplies they may need, and talk to patients about anything they wish to speak about. Because I want to go into the medical field when I am older, White Plains Hospital has allowed me to gain exposure to the field, while also helping me give back to my community. Along with these programs I volunteered at smaller organization such as tutoring children at Sacred Heart School in Hartsdale, and volunteering at various events at The Ursuline School.

In total, I have served 86 hours of service through each of the organizations mentioned above. I have spent 47.5 hours at White Plains Hospital, about 13 hours at Gigi's Playhouse, and the rest of my time around other community events. I believe service of any kind is beneficial to the community and to ourselves as people. The amount of time I have spent volunteering does not merely reflect my commitment to service, but my commitment to the bettering of our society and allowing myself to gain skills and improving the quality of life for others. Programs at Gigi's where I volunteer consist of a range of activities. For example, the Kids Club is a program dedicated to helping children gain self-help, gross and fine motor skills through activities that require concentrated use of the hands. White Plains Hospital also reflects the mission of commitment to the community. One specific memory I hold is when a woman had asked me for an extra pillow. When I brought it back to her, she asked me my age and thanked me for my volunteer service. We then spoke to each other for almost 20 minutes, her telling me of her grandchildren and I telling her of little things going on in my life at the time. What was seemingly a small gesture, was actually an amazing conversation. I would have never had to

opportunity to talk to this woman and heard about her life had I not taken up volunteering.

Volunteer and service work is the opportunity to leave a positive mark on our communities while also exploring personal interests that these opportunities may bring about. The smallest tasks can have the biggest rewards when it comes to giving back and appreciating people and communities, which is why I believe volunteering is terrific.